



TRINITY CHIMES

NEWSLETTER OF THE TRINITY REFORMED CHURCH

DECEMBER 2007

CHRISTMAS - THE ULTIMATE REUNION

The following is a true story written by Pastor Rob Reid:

The brand new pastor and his wife, newly assigned to their first ministry to reopen a church in suburban Brooklyn, arrived in early October excited about their opportunities. When they saw their church, it was very run down and needed much work. They set a goal to have everything done in time to have their first service on Christmas Eve. They worked hard, repairing pews, plastering walls, painting, etc., and on December 18th they were ahead of schedule and just about finished. On December 19th a terrible tempest - a driving rainstorm - hit the area and lasted for two days. On the 21st, the pastor went over to the church. His heart sank when he saw that the roof had leaked, causing a large area of plaster about 20 feet by 8 feet to fall off the front wall of the sanctuary just behind the pulpit, beginning about head high.

The pastor cleaned up the mess on the floor, and not knowing what else to do but postpone the Christmas Eve service, headed home. On the way he noticed that a local business was having a flea market type sale for charity so he stopped in. One of the items was a beautiful, handmade, ivory colored, crocheted tablecloth with exquisite work, fine colors and a Cross embroidered right in the center. It was just the right size to cover up the hole in the front wall. He bought it and headed back to the church.

By this time it had started to snow. An older woman running from the opposite direction was trying to catch the bus. She missed it. The pastor invited her to wait in the warm church for the next bus 45 minutes later. She sat in a pew and paid no attention to the pastor while he got a ladder, hangers, etc., to put up the tablecloth as a wall tapestry. The pastor could hardly believe how beautiful it looked and it covered up the entire problem area.

Then he noticed the woman walking down the center aisle. Her face was like a sheet. "Pastor," she asked, "where did you get that tablecloth?" The pastor explained. The woman asked him to

check the lower right corner to see if the initials, EBG were crocheted into it there. They were. These were the initials of the woman, and she had made this tablecloth 35 years before, in Austria.

The woman could hardly believe it as the pastor told how he had just gotten the Tablecloth. The woman explained that before the war she and her husband were well-to-do people in Austria. When the Nazis came, she was forced to leave. Her husband was going to follow her the next week. She was captured, sent to prison and never saw her husband or her home again. The pastor wanted to give her the tablecloth; but she made the pastor keep it for the church. The pastor insisted on driving her home, which was the least he could do. She lived on the other side of Staten Island and was only in Brooklyn for the day for a housecleaning job.

What a wonderful service they had on Christmas Eve. The church was almost full. The music and the spirit were great. At the end of the service, the pastor and his wife greeted everyone at the door and many said that they would return. One older man, whom the pastor recognized from the neighborhood, continued to sit in one of the pews and stare, and the pastor wondered why he wasn't leaving. The man asked him where he got the tablecloth on the front wall because it was identical to one that his wife had made years ago when they lived in Austria before the war and how could there be two tablecloths so much alike? He told the pastor how the Nazis came, how he forced his wife to flee for her safety, and he was supposed to follow her, but he was arrested and put in a prison. He never saw his wife or his home again all the 35 years in between.

The pastor asked him if he would allow him to take him for a little ride. They drove to Staten Island and to the same house where the pastor had taken the woman three days earlier. He helped the man climb the three flights of stairs to the woman's apartment, knocked on the door and he saw the greatest Christmas reunion he could ever imagine.

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Our vision is
to help
people find
New Life in
Jesus Christ!



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That is an amazing story. Two people reunited after all those years. It also reminds me of Christmas – the ultimate reunion. God became flesh and Jesus was born into this world to make it possible for an estranged humanity to become reconciled with their Maker. The baby Jesus grew up to show us how much God loves us. He then gave his own life as a sacrifice on the cross to pay for our sins, so that by believing in him we can be made right with a holy God. May you during this wonderful season experience the joy of having been reunited with God through Jesus!

Merry Christmas!

Rev. Dr. Albert Potgieter

Jetzt Kann Gott Kommen

Ein Mann erfuhr, dass Gott zu ihm kommen wollte. "Zu mir?" schrie er. "In mein Haus?"

Er rannte durch alle Zimmer, er lief die Stiegen auf und ab, er kletterte zum Dachboden hinauf, er stieg in den Keller hinunter. Er sah sein Haus mit anderen Augen. "Unmöglich!" schrie er. "In diesem Sauhaufen kann man keinen Besuch empfangen. Alles verdreckt. Alles voller Gerümpel. Kein Platz zum Ausruhen. Keine Luft zum Atmen.

Er riß Fenster und Türen auf. "Brüder, Freunde!" rief er. "Hilft mir aufräumen – irgendeiner! Aber schnell!" Er begann, sein Haus zu kehren. Durch dicke Staubwolken sah er, dass ihm einer zu Hilfe gekommen war. Sie schleppten das Gerümpel vors Haus, schlugen es klein und verbrannten es. Sie schrubbten Stiegen und Böden. Sie brauchten viele Kübel Wasser, um die Fenster zu putzen. Und immer noch klebte der Dreck an allen Ecken und Enden. "Das schaffen wir nie!" schnaufte der Mann. "Das schaffen wir!" sagte der andere. Sie plagten sich den ganzen Tag.

Als es Abend geworden war, gingen sie in die Küche und deckten den Tisch. "So" sagte der Mann, "jetzt kann er kommen, mein Besuch! Jetzt kann Gott kommen. Wo er nur bleibt?" "Aber ich bin ja da!" sagte der andere und setzte sich an den Tisch. "Komm und iß mit mir!"

(Lene Mayer-Skumanz in "Weihnachtsfeiern im Advent", Materialsammlung herausgegeben vom Deutschen Liturgischen Institut in Trier)

All I Want For Christmas Is...



Do you know what you want for Christmas this year? My kids know exactly what they want and have been busy with their lists for quite a while now. So the problem in our family is not that they don't know what they would like for Christmas; the problem is explaining to them that we cannot afford everything they have on their lists. We love to spoil them at times, but it remains a challenge to

explain to them that there is a big difference between what we want in life and what we really need.

Starting on December 2, I will be preaching a series of messages called "All I want for Christmas is..." I think we have all received gifts that we don't particularly want. Maybe it was another tie or a fruit cake or whatever. Each year we seem to get something that we have no need for. I invite you to join me on Sundays to hear about the Christmas gifts that we will want to keep. The gifts that transcend all those wants in our lives and truly speak to our needs - Pastor Albert.

Candlelight Service



One of the highlights on our church calendar is our annual Community Candlelight Service. The celebration of the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ; the enthusiastic and spirited singing of the congregation; the lighting of the candles and the special music make this an experience not to miss. This year we will gather at Trinity on **December 16 at 7:00 pm**. Part of our program for the evening will be a performance by the Celebration Singers of the Colonial Church of Bayside. This year they will be doing a musical called, "On This Very Night."

This Christmas, stand in the shoes of those who first heard the news that Christ was coming - those that were chosen to be part of delivering and witnessing and receiving the Good News. How would you respond? How do you respond to this truth right now? "On this very night" will tell us that everything has changed: God is among us! We look forward to seeing you on the 16th. Please spread the word about this beautiful service and why don't you bring a friend along for the evening.

NCD Update

On October the 7th, 30 of our members completed the Natural Church Development Survey. Thank you again to all those who were willing to participate in the survey. The purpose of the survey was to determine the minimum factor for our church. This will in turn help us to identify the area on which we want to focus our attention first, as we seek to grow a healthier congregation. The idea is to work harder in this identified area of our church life for a year, after which another survey will be taken. The results of the next survey will then show whether we made any progress, and the process will repeat itself.

In November, Rev. Jon Norton, the Synod Area Minister of New York, visited with Pastor Albert to discuss the results of the survey. It was explained to him that the next step would be to report and explain the results to the leadership of the church, as well as the members who completed the survey. This will provide an opportunity for questions and to further discern the collective voice of the congregation.

During the November Consistory Meeting it was decided to invite Rev. Norton to come preach at Trinity and share the results after the service. This date has been set for January 27. More information will follow in the January issue of the Chimes.

Building Repair Fund Drive Update

If you've been coming to church recently you probably noticed the repair work going on outside which is nearing completion. As of mid-November, we expended \$ 17,800 and expect to make the final payment of almost \$ 8,900 shortly. This will cover the cost of the outside work. After we wait to make sure that the water infiltration problem has been solved, we will begin the repairs to the inside walls. We have obtained an estimate for that work which is almost \$ 7,450. That will bring the total cost of this building repair project to \$ 34,150.

As of mid-November we have received \$ 25,756.16 in donations, which means we still need to raise almost \$ 8,400. If we do not get this amount we will have to once again dip into our reserve funds to make up the difference. If you have not yet made a contribution to the building repair fund drive we ask that you consider doing so now. Thank you for your support.

2008 Offering Envelopes

In order to help you make your weekly offerings to Trinity, we are again supplying you with a box of offering envelopes for the New Year. These envelopes enable us to give you a statement at the end of the year for tax purposes and they serve as a visual reminder for you to be faithful in supporting God's work. Your box of offering envelopes is available for pick up on Sundays during our weekly services.

Ladies Aid Cake Sale



The Ladies Aid/ Frauenverein again had a very successful cake and white elephant table sale on November 17. The ladies took in \$464.75 at the cake table and

\$314.55 at the white elephant table to benefit our church and the other good things the ladies do.

Christmas Envelope Included

If you have received God's free gift of grace in Jesus Christ, then you know how generous our God really is. Christmas is a reminder of the precious gift that we have all received in Christ the Savior, who was born to be for us the way to eternal life. The Bible says about God in 1 Chronicles 29:16, "Everything has come from You and everything belongs to you." This serves as a powerful reminder that all we have is in reality a gift from God and an outcome of his grace. We know that Christmas is a time of generosity, where the focus is on giving, rather than receiving. God has blessed you with wonderful blessings and we encourage you to be generous in your Christmas Offering to Trinity this year. We have included a special envelope for this purpose in this month's mailing. Thank you very much for your goodwill and generosity and have a blessed Christmas.

Disciples Small Groups

Approximately 23 people joined the Small Groups formed for this year's spiritual growth journey. It is exciting to hear that after a break during the month of December, the groups will continue to meet in January. The plan is to progress to the next study in the "Disciples" series. There are in all 5 studies for the first year, with three additional years of studies to follow. This will enable us to keep the momentum going and also provide an ongoing opportunity for those who still want to join a Small Group. If you are interested experiencing biblical fellowship by joining one of these groups, please contact Pastor Albert.

It Makes You Think

Two women who were having lunch in an elegant hotel were approached by a mutual friend who asked the occasion for the meal. One lady replied, "We are celebrating the birth of my baby boy." "But where is he?" inquired the friend. "Oh," said the mother, "you didn't think I'd bring him, did you?" What a picture of the way the world treats Jesus at Christmas.

Source Unknown

A television interviewer was walking streets of Tokyo at Christmas time. Much as in America, Christmas shopping is a big commercial success in Japan. The interviewer stopped one young woman on the sidewalk, and asked, "What is the meaning of Christmas?" Laughing, she responded, "I don't know. Is that the day that Jesus died?" There was some truth in her answer.

Donald Deffner, Seasonal Illustrations, San Jose: Resource, 1992, p. 16.



Worship Schedule for December

December 2, 9, 16,

German Worship Celebration at 9:30 am
English Worship Celebration at 10:45 am

December 16—Candlelight Service at 7:00 pm

December 25—Christmas Celebration at 10:00 am

December 23, 30—Combined Service at 10:00 am

* Communion will be celebrated on December 2